

AMENDMENT

In response to the Office action dated October 17, 2001, please amend the present application as follows:

In the Specification

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 6 and ending at page 8, line 19 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A¹

-- With reference now to Figs. 1 and 5, the thermoforming component of the vehicle mat production line 10 is shown. The thermoforming station 20 generally includes a loading station 55, an oven 56 and a mold 58 located within the oven 56. The blanks 52 are placed on the conventional loading station 54 and transported into the oven 56. In the novel method of the present invention, the mat blank 52 is loaded on the loading station 54 so that smooth (or slightly textured) side 60 is directed toward the mold 58 and the nibbed side 62 is directed in the direction opposite the mold. Next, the mat blank 52 is placed directly over the mold 58. The mold 58 is preferably a male tool contoured to shape the vehicle surface to be covered by the mat. The mold 58 has a block-like base 64, an upstanding form 66 on the upper surface of the base 64 and a flat peripheral ledge 68 between the outer edge of the form 66 and the edge of the base 64. In the preferred embodiment, the form 66 includes upwardly extending sidewalls 70 and a top 71. As would be understood, the form 66 may take any of a wide variety of complex shapes have a plurality of curved, flat and transitional surfaces typical of the interior floorboards of passenger vehicles, and cargo areas of a variety of trucks, vans and sport utility vehicles.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 20 and ending at page 9, line 5 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A²

-- The mold 58 includes a plurality of vacuum apertures 72 formed thereon. To form the mat blank 52 into the formed mat 73, the blank 52 is heated by the oven 56 and the negative vacuum pressure applied through vacuum apertures 72 draws the blank toward the mold 58. While the preferred embodiment relies solely on vacuum pressure, the inventive technique also contemplates methods of utilizing